

COM 165: Print and Online Newswriting and Reporting
T/TH 3:35 to 4:50 p.m. Location: Fell 102
Spring 2024

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Office Hours: Tuesday 5 to 6 p.m. and by
appointment

Course Description

Intensive training in the fundamentals of newsgathering and newswriting for print and online mediums. Students will learn and exercise skills in interviewing, writing and modern-day reporting, by taking traditional writing and reporting and applying these to the digital news cycle. There will be an additional focus on AP Style, accuracy and ethics throughout the semester.

Course Objectives

As your instructor, my objective is to create an engaging and exciting environment to learn about the fundamentals of newswriting and reporting. I will have fulfilled my personal expectations if each student is excited about their future as a journalist. During the semester, students will work toward the following objectives:

- Gain experience and insights of writing for print and online mediums
- Understand and critique various types of writing techniques
- Determine what is newsworthy
- Understand promotion and repurposing content for social media
- Demonstrate effective steps in writing, including rewriting
- Exercise a basic knowledge of AP Style
- Understand and demonstrate ethics of journalism and attribution of sources
- Produce clear, concise and error-free writing
- Be aware of current events in the news - including local and national topics

Required Texts

- Carole Rich (8^h Edition) *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* (2021 or later), Basic Books.
- Various Media Outlets: Students need to keep abreast of current events via local and national

newspapers and websites, especially leading up to any elections/politics during the semester.

Course Expectations

Students are expected to come to class fully engaged and prepared to learn, share and explore reporting with their fellow students. Weekly readings should have been completed, and students should come prepared to talk about topics in the news. You will be tasked with developing a professional demeanor – as expected in the professional/business world. Be kind, serious and polite with everyone you work with through the time of this class; Honor and respect diverse viewpoints.

Scoring

This is intended to be an overview, and changes may be needed to accommodate class work and expectations.

350 points: Participation, In-Class Work and Attendance

100 points: Quizzes

100 points: Student Profile

100 points: Breaking News Story (Mock story)

100 points: Meeting/Government News Story

100 points: Event Story

50 points: Final: Part 1 AP Style Editing Assignment

50 points: Final: Part 2 Lead and Nutgraph Writing

50 Points: Final: Part 3: Test

1,000 Points Overall

Grading Scale:

A = 90.00% and greater

B = 80.00% – 89.99%

C = 70.00% – 79.99%

D = 60.00% – 69.99%

F = less than 60.00%

Student Success Metrics

Deadlines

Assignments must be completed and submitted at the beginning of the class period on the date they are due, unless otherwise indicated. Assignments will only be accepted via Canvas. *If you turn in an assignment late, you will receive a zero for that assignment unless an alternate due date has **previously** been approved and is within a week of the original deadline. Penalty points may also be taken from your overall score.*

Attendance

Attendance is required for all class sessions. Students are expected to attend class in-person as offered.

Flexibility on in-person and virtual sessions may be needed and will be communicated via Canvas.

In-class interviews/guest speakers are a substantial part of your participation grade and can only be completed in-person or synchronously. Therefore, if you do not attend a class, you will receive zero points for those exercises you miss. Students missing more than three classes without a satisfactory explanation will receive a grade penalty, as will students who repeatedly come late.

In-class Technology

Be engaged in class meetings and avoid distractions. Small group work will be part of class. You should not be checking email, on social media, shopping, playing games, watching sports or working on other classwork during class, which is a real-world expectation for a working journalist. **Remember:** Participation is part of your grade.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct](#) and any additional syllabus language. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and/or unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism.

Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization is another form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible. Any allegation of academic dishonesty may be referred to [Student Conduct and Community Responsibilities](#), a unit of the Dean of Students Office, for possible review. If found responsible for academic dishonesty, a grade penalty can also be applied.

In this course, the use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT or Adobe Firefly) is not permitted during the completion of any assigned work. Use of a generative AI tool to complete assigned work in whole or in part may be referred under the Code of Student Conduct academic dishonesty provisions for further action by the Dean of Students Office. Students may use generative AI tools to support their independent study of course topics but should do so with the understanding that generative AI tools may not be trustworthy.

Permission required to record

Students who wish to use audio or video devices to record classroom lectures or discussions must obtain written permission from the instructor. Such recordings are to be used solely for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the class. They may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments. Students with disabilities who need to record classroom lectures or discussions must contact the [Student Access and Accommodation Services](#). Students who violate this policy may be subject to both legal sanctions for violations of copyright law and disciplinary action under the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Student Access and Accommodation Services:

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell

Hall, [\(309\) 438-5853](tel:3094385853), or visit the website at StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu.

Mental Health Resources

Hey, I get it: Life at college can get complicated. If you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed, lost, anxious, depressed or are struggling with personal issues, do not hesitate to call or visit [Student Counseling Services](#) (SCS). These services are free and completely confidential. SCS is located at 320 Student Services Building, [\(309\) 438-3655](tel:3094383655).

If you are worried about a friend and don't know how to help, you can call SCS and ask to speak to a counselor. The [Kognito simulation](#), available through SCS's webpage, can also help you learn how to assist your friend in connecting to services.

Class Schedule

Subject to change if needed, Always Check Canvas/Announcements

Week One: Intro to Class

- 1.1 Lecture
- 1.2 Assignment: In Class
- 1.3 AP Style Words
- 1.4 Reading: Rich Chapter 1 & 2

Week Two: What is News? Intro to Politics

- 2.1 Lecture
- 2.2 Assignments: In Class
- 2.3 AP Style Words

Week Three: Writing and Reporting

- 3.1 Lecture and Guest Speaker
- 3.2 Assignments: In Class
- 3.3 AP Style Words
- 3.4 Reading: Rich Chapters 7, 8 & 9
- 3.5 Quiz 1**

Week Four: Interviewing and Sources

- 4.1 Lecture
- 4.2 Assignments
- 4.3 AP Style Words
- 4.4 Reading: Rich Chapter 4 & 5

Week Five: People and Profiles

- 5.1 Lecture
- 5.2 Assignments
- 5.3 AP Style Words
- 5.4 Reading: Rich Chapter 17
- 5.5 Quiz 2**

Week Six: Disasters

- 6.1 Lecture
- 6.2 Assignments
- 6.3 AP Style Words
- 6.4 Reading: Rich Chapter 21
- A1: Student Profile Due**

Week Seven: Breaking News and Mock Event

- 7.1 Lecture
- 7.2 Assignments

Week Eight: Politics and Opinions

- 8.1 Lecture
- 8.2 Assignments
- 8.3 AP Style Words
- 8.4 Quiz 3**
- A2: Breaking News Story Due** (*No In person Class March 7*)

Week Nine: Spring Vacation (Week of March 11)

Week 10: Meetings and Press Conferences

- 10.1 Lecture
- 10.2 Assignments
- 10.3 AP Style Words
- 10.4 Reading: Rich Chapter 12

Week 11: Leads/Headlines

- 11.1 Lecture
- 11.2 Assignments
- 11.3 AP Style Words
- 11.4 Reading: Rich Chapter 4 and 10

Week 12: Feature Stories

- 12.1 Lecture
- 12.2 Assignments
- 12.3 AP Style Words
- 12.4 Rich Chapter 10

12.5 Quiz 4

A3: Meeting/Government Story Due

Week 13: Real Careers

- 13.1 Lecture and Guest Speaker
- 13.2: Assignments

Week 14: Online & Digital Journalism

- 14.1 Lecture
- 14.2 Assignments
- 14.3 AP Style Words

A4: Event Story Due

Week 15: Media Law and Ethics

- 15.1 Lecture
- 15.2 Assignments
- 15.3 AP Style Words
- 15.4 Reading: AP Style Book: Briefing on Media Law

15.5 Quiz 5

Week 16: Journalism Changes Lives/Reading Week

- 16.1 Lecture

Week 17: Finals Week

Final Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 (Test) Due: See Canvas for Details and Due Dates* *No Late Finals will be accepted.